

Dateline DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Western Maryland Hospital Center Receives Performance Excellence Award

Whether it is working to return someone who has been a patient for 34 years to independent living, or decorating another patient's room with pleasing colors, the Western Maryland Hospital Center's (WMHC) vision is creating a 'healing environment.'

Effective implementation of that vision has paid off for DHMH's long-term acute care hospital and skilled nursing facility located in Hagerstown. The Governor's Performance Excellence Assessment Program recently awarded WMHC the Level 1 honor. This recognition, the highest State organizational award available, is based on the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria, a widely-used national standard for organizational excellence for private industry, government, health care, and business.

The award was presented in late November at the Governor's Annual Awards and Employee Recognition Training Conference held at the Baltimore Convention Center. Also known as the 'Gold' award, the WMHC is the first State organization to receive a Level 1 award in three years. WMHC was one of six organizations nominated for the award and was the only one to achieve the Level I recognition. The Center received the Level 2, or 'Silver', award last year.



An example of the success the Center has achieved is reflected in its philosophy to create beautiful surroundings and a healing environment.

"To help with the healing process for all of our clients, we placed an emphasis on improving areas that affect their environment," says Cynthia M. Pellegrino, Director and CEO. "Our goal was to improve everything they see, touch, smell and taste."

Using donated time and money, the staff has de-institutionalized the interior of what is home to up to 120 long-term acute care clients. The beauty shop, dining room and general hallways have been redecorated. Individual rooms, to the extent possible, have been tailored to meet the needs and likes of the residents. In addition, the grounds have been turned into a refuge of peace and tranquility with fishponds and fountains as well as wheelchair-accessible flower and vegetable gardens.

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Black History Month

Healthy People Living Healthy Lifestyles is the theme for this year's Black History Month celebration.

Scheduled for February 28th in the O'Connor Building lobby, this year's festivities will have health screenings for diabetes and high blood pressure. Information on healthy cooking, cancer awareness and health monitoring will also be available.

Federally-qualified health centers, community health centers, local health departments, family and community health programs and various DHMH administrations will have displays.

For more information, please contact the Office of Community Relations at 410-767-6600.

Western Maryland Hospital Center *Continued*

"The goal is to treat the entire person, mind, body and spirit," says Ms. Pellegrino. "The healing environment has come to life by the generous time and talents of our staff and volunteers. This is an outstanding and dedicated staff and they are very deserving of this tremendous honor."

And the Center's vision has yielded results. A quadriplegic patient who has been a resident of the hospital center for 34 years is almost ready for independent living. Injured in a diving accident in 1968, the staff is busy preparing him for a handicapped-accessible apartment. "We don't know if it will work — he doesn't know if it will work — but he is getting his chance, and we believe he will succeed," says Ms. Pellegrino.

Another quadriplegic patient, a 17-year resident, wanted orchid-colored walls in her room. "This is the one thing she could control in her life," Ms. Pellegrino says. "So we found a way to do it."

Public and private sector facilities that provide comparable services often contact WMHC for advice, so they can get similar results. This is one of the reasons the Center has been able to go from a Level 2 to a Level 1 award.

"We are looked at as a leader in the industry for our strategic planning," says Ms. Pellegrino. "We often assist other organizations who want to refine their techniques or implement a strategic plan."

The Hospital Center has also received national recognition

for its patient ventilator management program. Its pain management protocols have been acknowledged by the pharmaceutical industry. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations has recognized the facility's wound management program and infection control practices. WMHC is one of a few select facilities in the nation to participate in a practical research trial on the use of percussion vests. The percussion vests assist patients to maintain open airway passages and prevent life-threatening pneumonia.

To qualify for consideration for the award, an organization must be nominated. A team of individuals from the public and private sectors evaluate the nomination application and conduct a site visit. When compiling their ratings, the team concentrates on seven areas: leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, information and analysis, human resources, process management, and results.

WMHC, which has 327 employees, is one of two long-term acute care facilities operated by the DHMH Family Health Administration to provide care for patients who are often experiencing multi-system failures. The other is the Deer's Head Center, located in Salisbury.

Performance Excellence Nominations Are Due by February 15

Nominations are now being accepted through February 15th for the second annual DHMH Performance Excellence Awards.

Developed by the DHMH Performance Excellence Council, these awards are designed to recognize DHMH employees who perform above and beyond standard duties and produce noticeable results. Awards are also presented to process improvement teams that enhance a product or service or create a new one.

Individual awards are available for administrators, office and clerical workers, paraprofessionals, professionals (both supervisors and workers), public safety and security workers, service/maintenance workers, skilled craft workers, and technicians. Categories include internal and external customer satisfaction, innovation, and leadership. Awardees will receive a framed certificate signed by the Secretary.

Any DHMH employee may nominate any other DHMH employee. These awards are also available for contractual employees.

For more information, contact Lee Williamson, Performance Excellence Coordinator, at 410-767-5190 or by e-mail at llwilliamson@dhhm.state.md.us.

A Big Thank You

Debra Searing of the Laboratories Administration writes:

"A sincere thank you to those who donated generous amounts to the pet food and non-perishable food drive held during December. Donations benefitted Baltimore City Animal Shelter,

Continued on page 3

An Open Letter . . .

I would like to, on behalf of our patients, as well as staff, thank the many organizations, churches, and individuals that made possible the Holiday 2002 here at Springfield Hospital Center. Our patients enjoyed every party and the entertainment as well as all the gifts on Christmas Day. This event-filled month was due to the working together of our community and staff. It certainly brought much happiness to the patients. The weather even played an important part in making their day very special.

Our goal in Volunteer Services throughout the year as well as during the Holidays is to provide for the needs of our patients and without each of you this would be impossible. Again, MANY THANKS! We hope that each of you had the Best Holiday possible and that year 2003 will bring Happiness, Prosperity, and your continued involvement with our patients. We all need to know that someone cares.

Sincerely, Betty Jean Maus
Volunteer Services Director, Springfield Hospital Center

Congratulations to . . .

Kathy Chavis, who is the new Privacy Officer and HIPAA Project Manager for the Information Management Resources Administration. A former assistant State's Attorney for Baltimore City, Kathy most recently was the HIPAA Compliance Manager for CareFirst. Prior to that, she served as a special assistant and program manager for the AIDS Administration.

Art Thatcher, former Health Officer for Prince George's County, who has been appointed deputy director of the Information Management Resources Administration. While in Prince George's County, Art designed and implemented an integrated client information system that now automates a wide variety of clinical, epidemiologic and management functions in each of the health department's facilities.

Calendar of Events

Saturday, March 22 — *Conference: Ninth Annual Update on Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*; Johns Hopkins School of Medicine; 7:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. Jointly sponsored by the Copper Ridge Institute and the Greater Maryland Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. Log on to www.hopkinsmedicine.org for more information.

Tuesday, April 29 — *Breakfast Meeting: MCI — Mild Cognitive Impairment*; Somerford Place, Columbia, Maryland; 8:30 - 10:00 a.m. Sponsored by the Dementia Care Consortium of the Alzheimer's Association. Phone 410-561-9099 or 1-800-443-CARE for more information.

A Big Thank You *Continued*

Nests for the Night and Alley Animals; as well as Meals on Wheels, Little Sisters of the Poor and Christopher Place.

"Your thoughtfulness and generosity, given in these difficult economic times, is truly appreciated by these groups, and more so by the individuals that received the various food and comfort items.

"A special thanks to those in DHMH and the Department of General Services who authorized the drive, and to Ni Lui for helping with the collection of the items.

"Thank you again, and Happy New Year."

Stronger Bones Support You for Life



Do you know what osteoporosis and Baltimore County have in common? — *Numbers*.

The number of Marylanders aged 50 and over estimated to have osteoporosis and low bone mass equals the approximate population count for Baltimore County.

That means over 750,000 Marylanders are affected, and the numbers are only going to climb, according to projections made by the National Osteoporosis Foundation. The foundation says the prevalence of osteoporosis and low bone mass among this age group is expected to increase to 891,600 by the year 2010. Sixty-seven percent of these people will be women.

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Stronger Bones *Continued*

And DHMH is responding to the challenge posed by this data. *StrongerBones.org*, a Web site launched by DHMH in January, contains lots of great information on preventing osteoporosis. The site offers tips on how to build bone mass and reduce bone loss to prevent fractures, assess your bone strength, find help for brittle bones, and locate resources on bone health.

Also, an Osteoporosis Prevention And Education Task Force, introduced into the Maryland General Assembly by Senator Gloria Lawlah of Prince George's County and Delegate Clarence Davis of Baltimore City, was established in 2002. Task force members are developing an action plan for osteoporosis prevention in Maryland. The group meets quarterly and meetings are open to the public.

Information about osteoporosis in Maryland, as well as the task force meetings, can be found at *StrongerBones.org* or by calling Mary Concannon, the Maryland Osteoporosis Coordinator, at 410-767-4382.

Editor's Note: Thanks to the staff in the Family Health Administration's Division of Cardiovascular Health and Nutrition for writing this article.

Avoiding Drug Interactions

Medicines are powerful tools that can help the body heal, manage an illness or help with a health condition. But in order for drugs to be safe as well as effective, they must be used properly. Many people don't realize that when taken together,



some combinations can do more harm than good.

A few drugs are used together on purpose for an added effect, like codeine and acetaminophen for pain relief. But other drug-to-drug interactions may be unintended and even harmful. Prescription drugs can interact with each other or with over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, such as acetaminophen, aspirin, and cold medicine. Likewise, OTC drugs can interact with each other. Certain foods, beverages, alcohol, caffeine, and even cigarettes can interfere with medicines. This may make the drugs less effective or may cause dangerous side effects or other problems.

Sometimes the effect of one drug may be altered when used with other medications. For example, some kinds of antidepressants can decrease the effectiveness of certain blood pressure medications. In other cases, the effects of one drug can increase the risk of serious side effects from another. For example, some antifungal medications can interfere with the way some cholesterol-lowering medications are broken down by the body. This can increase the risk of a serious side effect.

How can you avoid harmful drug reactions? Start by telling your doctor about the medicines you use, both prescription and OTC. Also mention any herbal supplements, vitamins or minerals you may take, and how often you take them. Tell your doctor about your lifestyle, including any use of coffee or other caffeinated beverages, alcohol or tobacco products.

Your pharmacist is another great source for information about the medicines you use. When you pick up a prescription, be sure to

read the label and make sure you understand the directions. If the medication should be taken with a meal, are there foods to avoid? Should the medicine be taken at the same time everyday, or on an as-needed basis? Ask your pharmacist about anything you don't understand.

Finally, be sure to store your medicines properly. High heat and humidity levels can make some drugs less effective. This means you may have to find an alternative to the bathroom medicine cabinet. Wherever you keep them, sort through your medicines at least once a year, and discard any expired prescriptions or OTC drugs.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Tara Snyder, Community Health Educator in the Center of Health Promotion, Education and Tobacco Prevention, for writing this article.



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